

# Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM

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London SE1 2AA  
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Heidi Alexander  
Deputy Mayor for Transport

(by email)

8th July 2020

Dear Heidi,

## **Re: Placing Thameslink on the Tube map and making greater use of Stratford International**

Thank you for your letter of 30<sup>th</sup> Jun 2020.

I am grateful for your response to both the issues I raised at Mayor's Question Time on the 18<sup>th</sup> June, however I regret that both these issues appear to have not been given the full consideration that I believe they deserve.

The case for placing the central section of Thameslink is very powerful and was indeed a recent unanimous recommendation by the London Assembly Transport Committee in its report 'From Step-Free to Stress-Free'.

[https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/accessible\\_transport\\_final.pdf](https://www.london.gov.uk/sites/default/files/accessible_transport_final.pdf)

As the central section offers fully accessible and frequent rail journeys the committee argued that raising awareness of the availability of this service would open up a significant part of the transport network for everyone, and in particular many disabled and older passengers.

The arguments for including Thameslink on the Tube map do however go much further, and indeed it is worth noting that Thameslink used to be included on the Tube map. I enclose a link to the Tube map from 1998:

<https://www.clarksbury.com/cdl/maps/tube98.jpg>

While I understand that the Tube map now only shows services operated by TfL, this is ultimately a self-imposed policy decision. I accept that the Tube map should primarily include services directly run by TfL, however I fail to see why it should be exclusively TfL services. I would argue the current policy should be reconsidered if the overall objective

of the Tube map and indeed of TfL is to effectively serve as many Londoners and visitors to London as is possible in making journeys. Indeed, it is worth noting that the Tube map includes a certain service which is currently used by an incredibly small number of passengers, most notably the Emirates cable car (TfL's website currently states in the week ending the 13<sup>th</sup> June just 3341 people used the cable car). In complete contrast the service that Thameslink runs through central section of London easily matches what other Tube lines provides. At peak times its frequency of 24 trains an hour is very similar to most London Underground lines. Moreover it charges fares on the same tariff as the London Underground, so for example a journey from London Bridge to St Pancras costs the same on Thameslink as it does on the Northern Line.

In relation to the second issue I raised, that of utilising capacity at Stratford International to ease pressure at Stratford station I very much welcome the fact that you have already raised the issue, at some point in the past, with Government. However, I would be grateful for more information about what steps have been taken in the last month to progress this issue. In the Mayor's response to my questions on the 18<sup>th</sup> June he specifically said:

"On that one, Chair, the Rail Delivery Group (RDG), which Heidi sits on, meetings (sic) on a weekly basis and sometimes more than once a week. What I can do is make sure that the Deputy Mayor puts this on the next agenda as an item with the RDG because that will be the place to co-ordinate this happening.

Can I ask whether this actually happened and if so, what was the outcome of the discussions? If for any reason the issue was not recently put on the agenda of the Rail Delivery Group, do you intend to take the steps that the Mayor promised?

More widely I would like to stress the response to both the issues I raised fail to fully engage with the overall issue I was seeking to highlight. During the Covid-19 pandemic and until a vaccine is found there is a critical need to be imaginative and creative in seeking solutions to enable all transport capacity to be put to good use, to help maintain as much as possible social distancing.

In relation to the issue of enabling Travelcard or fare capping to be used on the service between St Pancras and Stratford International you stated there was 'no appetite on the part of the Department for Transport' to accept this policy. Yet, while that might have been their long-standing policy, they now have the challenge, as does TfL, of seeking to ensure more people can travel while ensuring public safety is maintained as much as is practically possible. Arguably they have a strong incentive to rethink past thinking and for this reason I believe it is vital that TfL continues to actively push for this change in policy. I would also add that their influence and ability to direct policy over Southeastern has never been greater. The adoption of journeys being allowed by Travelcard and fare capping would play a significant role in reducing overcrowding and pressure at Stratford station, thereby playing an important public health role as well as bringing other passengers benefits from reducing excessive crowding at Stratford station.

Equally I believe the better promotion of Thameslink could play a valuable role in reducing pressure for passengers using the Northern Line, again bringing huge public health benefits during the Covid-19 pandemic.

For all the reasons set out above I do hope that TfL can ensure that Thameslink is placed on the Tube map as quickly as possible and separately seek to redouble its efforts to ensure that the ticket pricing barriers preventing people making full use of the St Pancras to Stratford International service are overcome as quickly as possible. Both these changes if secured would bring huge benefits every day to thousands of people.

Finally, to assist your full consideration of these issues I attach in full the Mayor's response to my questions on the 8th June.

I look forward to your response.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Caroline Pidgeon', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Caroline Pidgeon AM  
Liberal Democrat Assembly Member

## Travelling safely in London during the COVID-19 pandemic

2020/1614

18 June 2020

Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM

**Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM:** Thank you very much indeed for your answer, Mr Mayor. If we are to ensure social distancing is maintained while more people are starting to travel again, we really must look at all transport capacity to make sure it is all used and be imaginative. I have a few suggestions for you this morning.

Pre-COVID Stratford Station was incredibly crowded, yet there is significant spare capacity at the nearby Stratford International Station. That station could help relieve the situation and offer significant relief to Stratford Regional Station. It is only six minutes from central London, yet the current fare pricing deters many people from using this station.

I am wondering what discussions you are having with Southeastern and also the DfT to change this and to allow more passengers to use this route?

**Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London):** Chair, can I first of all put this on the record: the Assembly Member has been really constructive over the last 14 weeks, helping the Deputy Mayor and TfL with advice like this.

Can I be honest: I do not have the answer. Can I take this away? I promise to write to her or Heidi [Alexander, Deputy Mayor for Transport] will. I am not sure of the answer and I do not want to mislead inadvertently the Assembly Member. I will write back to you.

**Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM:** Thank you very much. It is an issue here around the pricing --

**Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London):** I get the point, Assembly Member. It is a sound point. Can I look into it?

**Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM:** It is a way we could add capacity. Another area where you could make a change very quickly - and you could do this - is by putting Thameslink on the Tube map. Thameslink is fully accessible for disabled people. It is an incredibly frequent Tube-like service through the centre of London. It could provide an alternative route for many people, reducing pressure particularly on things like the Northern line. This was a recommendation that came from the Transport Committee recently. Will you look to put Thameslink on the Tube map?

**Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London):** On that one, Chair, the Rail Delivery Group (RDG), which Heidi sits on, meetings on a weekly basis and sometimes more than once a week. What I can do is make sure that the Deputy Mayor puts this on the next agenda as an item with the RDG because that will be the place to co-ordinate this happening.

**Caroline Pidgeon MBE AM:** Lots of Londoners do not know about it. It is this hidden gem, virtually a Tube line, as I say, through the centre of London and it is fully accessible. People with mobility issues really welcome being able to travel like anyone else and there is also space on those Thameslink lines. I hope you can take that forward, but you could make that decision and put that line on the map. Will you do that?

**Sadiq Khan (Mayor of London):** We will discuss it at the RDG. I am not sure it is quite as straightforward as that. We will speak to the DfT on the RDG to see if we can take this forward.